

Redstone Rocket

VOL. 52 No. 8

Published in the interest of personnel at Redstone Arsenal, AL

February 26, 2003

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Tax preparation shouldn't be taxing

Center offers free services
for Redstone community

By SKIP VAUGHN

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Retired sergeant major Bob Vanderburg and his wife, Brigitta, paid dearly for not using Redstone's free tax preparation service last year.

Instead they went to a certified public accountant and paid \$190 to have their taxes done. "And she did not do as good a job as they do here," Brigitta said. "They are friendly, efficient; you couldn't ask for anything better."

"I thought it was great," Bob said of the free services. "I thought it was terrific."

The Vanderburgs are among the more than 400 clients in the first 12 days since the Redstone Tax Center opened Feb. 3. The staff prepares federal and state income tax returns and electronically files them

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Photo by Skip Vaughn

SERVING CLIENT— 1st Lt. Timothy Horning prepares a tax return for Air Force SSgt. Craig McNeil, a Huntsville recruiter.

Directorate sticks with lapel pin fund-raiser

Pentagon pin commemorates
1-year anniversary of Sept. 11

By SANDY RIEBELING

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The Materiel Management Directorate will offer a new lapel pin this year to raise funds for Army Emergency Relief.

The Pentagon-shaped pin has an American flag centerpiece with "United in Freedom" embossed around the top edges and the anniversary date of Sept. 11, 2002 at the bottom.

It is a symbol of remembrance as well as resolve. On the back of this commemorative decoration is engraved another message: "...we will not fail." Pres. George W. Bush."

As more troops are called to active duty to prepare for potential war in Iraq, the need for emergency aid to soldiers and families in crisis grows as well. One of the ways the Army helps its own is through AER assistance.

Last year the AER campaign Armywide raised \$7.1 million in contributions and gave away more than \$38 million in interest free loans and grants to active duty soldiers, retirees and qualifying family members. Redstone raised more than \$102,000 and awarded \$352,733 among 483 eligibles.

This year's campaign runs from March 1 to May 15 with a kickoff ceremony at Bob Jones Auditorium March 3 at 1 p.m. AER is funded through active duty soldier payroll allotments and money raised by the community through gifts and fund-raisers. Redstone's goal is \$65,000.

Last year's lapel pin fund-raiser netted AER nearly \$7,000. So when the one-year anniversary commemorative pin was created,

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Photo by Sandy Riebeling

PENTAGON PIN— Graciela Gonzalez, logistics automation specialist with the Materiel Management Directorate, holds a picture of the lapel pin for sale as a fund-raiser for Army Emergency Relief.

Returns

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free of charge for eligible clients – including active duty and retired servicemembers and their dependents. The eligible client base represents approximately 103,000 within 80 square miles of Redstone.

“We’re looking forward to helping as many eligible clients as we can this tax season,” Capt. William Carpenter, officer in charge of the tax center, said.

The center’s new web site should help get the word out. The Internet address is www.redstone.army.mil/legal/taxcenter.html. Accessible on the Redstone home page and other locations, it provides various federal and state income tax resources. The site went online Feb. 18 and had more than 200 hits by the following afternoon.

“I’m excited about the response to the new web site,” Carpenter said. “And I hope that will bring even more clients in and allow us to provide even more tax preparation and filing services for eligible clients in the Redstone community.”

The staff hopes to exceed last year’s numbers by April 15. Last year the center recovered \$1.3 million in refunds and saved clients more than \$185,000 in tax preparation and electronic filing fees.

“I look at this as a very valuable service we’re providing to the Redstone com-

munity,” Carpenter said.

Besides Carpenter the full-time staff includes Sgt. Brad Silvia, NCO in charge; Spec. Albert Newsome, Sgt. Brian Smith, PFC Christine Noriega and administrative assistant PFC Theron Toson. Part-time staffers include 1st Lt. Billy Whigham, 1st Lt. Timothy Horning, SSgt. Louie McGee, Randy Duff, Estan Rodriguez, David Wyatt, JoAnna Brunson, Cindy Van Rassen and Deborah Carpenter, the captain’s wife.

“The tax center is grateful to the support provided by Lori Pendley and Michael Wilkes in establishing the new tax center web site,” he said. Pendley is command webmaster; and Wilkes is an information technology specialist in the Corporate Information Center. Items of interest are to be added to the site periodically.

“Some of the other ways we’ve tried to improve the tax center: We painted the tax center before we opened and we’ve upgraded some of the office furniture for the tax center personnel and the clients,” Carpenter said. “We have also upgraded our automation equipment. And we have tried to expand our promotional advertising or marketing efforts.”

Redstone Tax Center, building 3489 off Ajax Road, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. by appointment only, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 5-7 for walk-in services. For an appointment, call 842-1040.



Photo by Skip Vaughn

GROUP SESSION— From left are PFC Theron Toson, PFC Christine Noriega, Sgt. Brian Smith, Capt. William Carpenter and Sgt. Brad Silvia.

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